

Still Buffering 399: “Twister” (1996)

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[theme music plays]

Rileigh: Hello, and welcome to Still Buffering, a cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I am Rileigh Smirl.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Now, is this our first episode that we'll be releasing—no, second during Pride month.

Rileigh: Chappell Roan came out during Pride month.

Sydnee: Well, that—that was good.

Rileigh: Well, the episode.

Sydnee: Well, not—[laughs]

Rileigh: I think Chappell Roan was already out.

Sydnee: Yeah. I think Chappell Roan was out.

Taylor: Yeah, she's been out for a minute.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, it's pretty—there are a lot of songs about it.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. [laughs] That's pretty clear. Um, no. I understand that Twister is a weird pick for Pride month, so I just thought I would jump—

Taylor: Is it, though?

[pause]

Sydnee: I don't know! I... it's very specific, maybe?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I feel like it makes sense for you to pick it during Pride month.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Yes. But I don't know if it's broadly applicable. But it is Pride month. Taylor, have you had any celebrations so far?

Taylor: Hmm... no, actually. I've just—I mean, I work in the gay-borhood. I work in the gayest neighborhood of New York City, so I am surrounded by the celebration. I'm just working it constantly. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: You're just workin' it?

Taylor: Yeah, well—no. Just—not workin' it. Working it. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Oh, working.

Taylor: Different, yeah.

Raleigh: Serving and serving.

Taylor: Hmm, one of those at least.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Raleigh, have you—I know you've been...

Rileigh: I did. I went to DC Pride. I'm in West Virginia for the summer but I drove up just for the one day just to do the Pride and come home.

Sydnee: To do the Pride.

Rileigh: Do the Pride.

Taylor: Do the Pride.

Rileigh: Do the Pride. Do the Pride. And I did it. And I came home.

Sydnee: And was it great?

Rileigh: It was great. I went to a Pink Pony Club themed pregame. Um, went to the parade. Got a lot of free stuff. Gave out so much free stuff. Um, and then I went to the block party. They block off a whole little street area there and have drinks on the street, and snacks, and DJs, and... it was great.

Sydnee: Nice.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Nice. Uh, I have not yet, either—now, our city has celebrated. There is, right in downtown Huntington there is now a beautiful rainbow crosswalk.

Taylor: Oh, nice!

Sydnee: Well, like, actually the whole intersection, so all four crosswalks are rainbow. And then a local artist, Sassa, did a jewel—'cause Huntington is also called the Jewel City—did this, like, multifaceted rainbow jewel right in the center of the intersection.

Rileigh: It's very beautiful.

Sydnee: It's beautiful. Like, with all the shading, you know, to make it look like a—you gotta see picture. It's really impressive. And it was like a big

community effort. It was all, you know, fundraised and a bunch of people came out and painted and... anyway.

Taylor: That's awesome.

Sydnee: It's really gorgeous. Yeah, I know. It was very cool to see in Huntington. Our Pride celebration in Huntington is today. It's in, like, an hour and a half.

Taylor: But is that your...

Raleigh: [crosstalk]

Taylor: Is that your actual Pride? 'Cause don't you also do something in October?

Sydnee: We do. So this is the, uh, Pride brunch.

Raleigh: In the park.

Sydnee: Pride brunch in the park. So the amphitheater where we are currently doing Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is, for today, starting at noon we'll have drag performances and—it's kind of like a... it's brunch and bring your own brunch.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: BYOB as in bring your own brunch.

Raleigh: And beverage.

Sydnee: And beverage. So you bring your baskets and bottles and set up in the park, and there's a big drag show on the stage, and they can use our Charlie and the Chocolate Factory set. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: So I don't know if there'll be any—it feels like there could be a lot of fun themed drag from that, but I don't know.

Rileigh: I really want someone to be the Unknown. That's really what I want.

Sydnee: Oh, that would be good.

Taylor: Do they—do the drag queens know the set they're working on? 'Cause I'm sure one of them would have thought of that if they knew.

Sydnee: I don't—

Rileigh: They must.

Sydnee: They know.

Rileigh: Because last year they dressed—a couple of them dressed in theme with SpongeBob. And did, like, a mermaid, and pirate, and all various things.

Sydnee: I just feel like—okay. From the Wonka, like, characters, the characters from Wonka, my guess would be, like, Veruca would be kind of a gay icon?

Taylor: Yeah?

Sydnee: She just has that vibe. You know what I mean?

Rileigh: I mean, or just Wonka.

Taylor: Well, definitely Won—well, it's funny, 'cause Wonka's very gay, and then Veruca Salt is a mean girl, and that's the two categories of, like, gay icons. Like—[laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Actually gay, or mean woman. One of those will get you there.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: I feel like Violet's also kind of camp.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. You could go—especially—

Rileigh: You could do a fun look with the turning blue and the... blueberry stuff.

Sydnee: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: Right?

Sydnee: That's what I—well, I was just wondering if that—if we'd see any of that represented. I don't know.

Rileigh: I feel like you could do a really good Willy Wonka.

Sydnee: Yeah, no. I think definitely.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And then I guess Oompa Loompas?

Taylor: Are gay icons? Is that what you're proposing?

Sydnee: No, I think that would be a fun drag.

Taylor: Oh, okay. [wheeze-laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] I don't know!

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: They're colorful.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Not in our version. We didn't make them orange and green.

Rileigh: Well, in your version they're colorful. They're like rainbow.

Sydnee: Rainbow.

Rileigh: So they are gay. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: So they're gay. I made them gay. I put them in overalls!

Taylor: Well, there you go.

Sydnee: I know. They actually accused me of putting them in overalls so that they'd all look like me, because I've just been wearing nothing but overalls this summer so far.

Rileigh: I've had two people point that out to me so far.

Sydnee: What?

Rileigh: "Seeing your sister wearing a lot of overalls these days."

[all laugh]

Taylor: How many pairs of overalls do you have?

Rileigh: So many! [laughs] So many.

Sydnee: Uh... do you want a real number?

Taylor: Yeah, I do, actually!

Sydnee: Okay. I only have... three—four pairs of shorty—like, the short underwears—underwears. Overalls. Short overalls. Sorry. Couldn't get the words out.

But I have, like, of long pants overalls... I bought this one pair on Amazon, and they weren't particularly expensive, so I thought, I'll get one of these. They look like they'd be a really good fit, but I don't know.

And they fit perfectly. It was like they were made for exactly the shape I am. I don't know why. And that's rare for overalls to fit me like that 'cause I'm like—my torso is weird.

Rileigh: [crosstalk]

Sydnee: And so I was so excited about this that I bought them in every color that they had. 'Cause they were cheap, and they were fit perfectly, and every color fits perfectly, which doesn't always happen, by the way. I know that sounds like a weird thing to say.

Rileigh: No, you're right.

Sydnee: But with Amazon, like, sometimes you order the exact same thing in two different colors and they fit totally differently and nobody knows why. But they—so I have dark blue, and light blue, and grey, and orange, and darker grey, and black, of those. So I have six pairs of those. And then I already had two pairs of, like, heavy duty, um...

Rileigh: Denim.

Sydnee: Yeah, denim overalls. I mean, these are technically denim, too. But it's that, like, soft den—you know? Like, thin, cottony denim. Not, like, heavy duty Dickies. My other ones are Dickies.

Teylor: So you've got a dozen.

Rileigh: Yes.

Sydnee: Yeah, I've got, like, a dozen.

Taylor: A dozen. Okay.

Sydnee: I just love 'em. I just love them. And over a tank top?

Taylor: I always felt like—

Sydnee: It's like the perfect look.

Taylor: —overalls were like a, you have one of 'em. Like, you got—like, I got the Carhartt, like the burnt orange pair.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Taylor: But that's—those are my overalls. And... you're just treating them like—like t-shirts. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Uh-huh.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I wear 'em pretty much every day now.

Raleigh: Or just like regleer pants.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Just like jeans.

Taylor: That's more regleer pants than I have. I don't have 12 pairs of pants.

Raleigh: Yeah, that is more. Yeah. I don't either.

Sydnee: Well—

Rileigh: I don't have 12 of anything.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I wear them pretty much every day. I mean, they're so—but like, you—here's the thing. So you've got the two pockets like pants have. And then you have the two back pockets like also pants have, so I can—

Taylor: We do understand how overalls work.

Sydnee: But then you get that nice—

Rileigh: We know the construction.

Sydnee: —little chest pocket. That's so helpful.

Taylor: Yeah, I mean, I can see that.

Sydnee: We've been building set, and so that pocket, I can hold all manner of hardware like little screws and nuts and bolts, all kinds of things like that. I've got my multi-tool in there. I've got my trauma shears in there. I have a couple shims in there. I have a paint key in there. I have at least two carabiners in there at all times. It's such a helpful pocket!

[pause]

And a pencil! And a pencil! Sometimes two pencils! All of that in that pocket.

Rileigh: That's a lot in a pocket.

Taylor: That's—that's a very, very useful pocket. You know, I—

Sydnee: And then I—I can reserve my other pockets for, like, normal stuff, like my keys and my phone wallet.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: What?

Taylor: I saw on—I think it was on TikTok. There was a lesbian talking about how they had the most lesbian thing ever, and it was a carabiner that was also a multi-tool. It was all in one. And I thought, "Oh, I should get that for Sydnee for the next birthday or holiday situation." Interesting that the most lesbian object to exist [through laughter] is what I would buy for Sydnee.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: You should've seen her face up close whenever you said "Carabiner that's also a multi-tool." It was like, "[gasps] What?"

Taylor: "Excuse me?"

Sydnee: I want that so much! And you know what's tough? It's tough to justify. I already have two multi-tools. I have, like, a little pocket sized one, and then you have one that you have to, like, clip on your belt 'cause it—

Raleigh: With a carabiner?

Sydnee: You could, yeah.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: But this one has it built in.

Sydnee: See, but that's the one I want.

Taylor: It's part of the multi-tool is a carabiner.

Sydnee: But it makes sense—I mean, I have, like, three levels of medical bags that I have with me at all times. I have, like, the standard, no big deal first aid kit that we use for, like, band-aids for scraped knees. Then I have, like, battlefield medic bag that's a little more intense. And then I have my EMT bag that's got, like, my, you know, bag mask for resuscitation and stuff

like that. I could intubate somebody. I wouldn't do that. But, I mean, I have the equipment.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So, I mean, like, it's good to have different levels of multi-tools. too, I think.

Taylor: Oh, I see, yeah.

Sydnee: That was my justification. I should have three.

Taylor: Clip one on to every pair of overalls, and then every pair of overalls is ready to go.

Sydnee: Ooh. I've also been collecting cool little pins to put on that front pocket, so everyone—like, I have one that has a little Mothman pin on it, and I have one that has a Jeremy Bearimy pin on it, and... anyway. I've got different... I have different pins. One says "Vaccines save lives."

Taylor: So you've got a uniform, but you're like a game character where you can change the skins to, like, alternate versions of it? It's all the same construction, it's just different color palate, different details.

Rileigh: That's exactly what it is.

Taylor: [wheeze-laugh]

Rileigh: Sydnee's an NPC.

[all laugh]

Taylor: Just toggles through the same setup. Alright.

Sydnee: They're just so useful. I don't know why everyone isn't wearing overalls all the time. They're just so useful

Taylor: Well, I don't know if useful is the word that most people hold first in their mind when it comes to fashion. But, you know, it's fine that you do.

Raleigh: I also like the usefulness of having my top separate from my bottom.

Taylor: Yeah, I don't—

Raleigh: So that, you know, I can go to the bathroom and don't have to, like, do a whole production. [laughs]

Taylor: I know. I don't want to feel like a little naked baby when I'm trying to pee.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well, I mean, there is that. I was, uh—I had set up one of the props for Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, and we needed a rope to tie somebody to a chair.

Taylor: Sure.

Sydnee: This is not important. You don't need the details. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Never do.

Sydnee: The—the point i—the point is, um, I couldn't find—we were gonna use a bungee cord but, like, they don't really sell bungee cords that are long enough to tie somebody to a chair. Which, by the way, don't ask for that! Don't say that. Like, "Do you have longer bungee cords? I'm trying to tie someone for a chair." Don't say that at Walmart.

Raleigh: You didn't say that, did you?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: What—hmm.

Sydnee: They were like, "What are you looking for?" I was like, "Bungee cords." And they showed me. And I was like, "These are only, like, 36 inches. That's not gonna stretch across a person and a chair."

Taylor: Well, that's... things you don't say out loud.

Raleigh: Now you're on a list somewhere.

Taylor: Yeah. A Walmart list.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: So I got a bunch of paracord in cool colors. And then, like, braided it into a big, thick rope, and then attached a ring and a carabiner to each end and, like, clipped one to the chair. So it's like an easy to use one, right? So, like, for onstage if you unclip the one carabiner you can wrap it around the person during the song and dance. It all makes sense when you've seen the show. You've seen it. You know.

Raleigh: I do.

Sydnee: It makes sense. You can wrap it around them and then clip it to the other carabiner and you've got an easy quick-release, like—you get it.

So I was showing the cast member who utilizes this how I had done it, and I was explaining it to her, and she stopped me before I could get very far and she said, "Sydnee. I'm a lesbian. I know how to use a carabiner."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] I really appreciated that. I was like, "That is fair. Never mind."

Raleigh: "Alright."

Sydnee: "This prop is specifically made for you." [laughs] "I tailored it to your interests." Anyway, so that's in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. Are you intrigued?

Taylor: This is an updated version, quickly.

Sydnee: Uh-huh.

Rleigh: It is a very updated version. I gotta say there are some parts that they—are pretty dark.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rleigh: Um, like I feel like Charlie and the Chocolate Factory—and this isn't what we're talking about today, so I won't go on too long—I just feel like usually there's always like, "No, the kids don't really die. They'll be fine. They just had something unfortunate happen to them, and Oompa Loompas have gotta go, like, squeeze the juice out of Violet or, like, you know, get Augustus out of the chocolate river. Whatever. They'll be fine."

This one—

Sydnee: Well, Gene Wilder says it in his version. He says, "They'll be returned to their awful, terrible selves."

Rleigh: And you see them all leave at the end and they're fine. Um, uh... in this one they, like, die.

Sydnee: We added a little—

Rleigh: Now, you added a little walk-across at the end so that the kids are like, "Ah, phew. There's all the kids. They're back." But, like, Veruca, like, doesn't just fall down the bad nut chute. The squirrels tear her limbs off her body.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rleigh: And that's in the song, where they say they're gonna tear her limb from limb.

Sydnee: Violet explodes.

Rileigh: Violet explodes.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: But then—

Rileigh: [simultaneously] Augustus gets—

Taylor: —Wonka magic puts them back together? Is that...

Sydnee: Uh, they don't... so—

Rileigh: In Sydnee and Justin's version. [laughs]

Sydnee: In—okay. There is no explicit "they're okay" in this version. In this version it is very much left up to, like—I mean, it seems like they're dead, huh? And then that's it. And then, like, Charlie and Willy Wonka sing a beautiful song together, and that's it. [laughs] Um, we added the—we didn't—man, I have to be so careful.

We didn't mess with anything. We didn't add a single line. We didn't delete a single line.

Rileigh: No, they just literally walk across the stage.

Sydnee: They just walk across the stage at the very end. There was a point in the song that made sense for them to walk across, so for any children watching who might be disturbed, they will see, "Ah. They're alive."

That was it. Because I found it a little disturbing how intense it is.

Rileigh: I mean, Augustus falls in the chocolate river and they sing a song about making the fudge out of the chocolate. About, like, dicing it and slicing it and boiling it and baking it and...

Sydnee: "As a boy he was so-so, but he'll make tasty fudge."

Rileigh: Uh-huh.

Taylor: Well!

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. Mike Teevee stays small.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Because his mom's like, "[sighs] This is much easier to deal with."

[pause]

So I guess he lives.

Rileigh: Just tiny.

Sydnee: I don't know. In our version everyone returns to okay. Or they walk across the stage, so you can interpret it that way. I don't know. It is—it is—

Rileigh: I did hear a small child behind me last night go, "[relieved exhale]" as soon as they walked across the stage. [laughs]

Sydnee: Good. No, it just—I—I don't think anybody is prepared for—if you're—although, I will say, my assumption is when I think of the Willy Wonka we all grew up with, I think of the Gene Wilder one.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: The real one, the original. Do you know how many people have said to me, "That's not the one that I grew up with. I grew up with the Johnny Depp one."

Rileigh: I did too. That's what I grew up with.

Sydnee: And they don't—like, so many people haven't even seen the Gene Wilder one, and so have no idea what I'm talking about. They're like, "Well, you—that doesn't happen in the Johnny Depp one."

And I'm like, "Ahhh!"

Rileigh: Yeah. I grew up with the Johnny Depp one.

Sydnee: "I'm so old!"

Taylor: I've never seen the Johnny Depp one. I don't think I would ever want to.

Rileigh: They're all fine at the end of that one too.

Sydnee: They are. I don't think it's nearly as good... as they original.

Rileigh: I've never seen the original.

Sydnee: How—

Taylor: I just love Gene Wilder in that. Like, I don't know how you—there's no better Wonka.

Sydnee: He really is, like, the—I mean, that was definitely more the inspiration that I think our Wonka was pulling from.

Rileigh: I mean, the costume is very Johnny Depp.

Sydnee: Yes. But the temperament...

Taylor: Hm.

Sydnee: We talked a lot about—we spent many hours talking about, like, who is Willy Wonk—how—how much intent—

Rileigh: Who is Willy?

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: —does Willy Wonka have in terms of, like, the children getting harmed? Is it all accidental? Is it "Oh well, I don't really care"? Is Willy Wonka really disturbed? Like, "I did not mean for this to happen. I'm upset that it did."

Like, what... how much malice or apathy or... genuine—I don't know. We spent lots of time discussing all this! [laughs] And I think it does depend on which one you saw. And, I mean, I don't know. I guess for some people that will be the Chalamet Willy Wonka.

Taylor: Oh, god.

Raleigh: Oh, man. I haven't seen that one.

Sydnee: Uh, the girls love it.

Raleigh: Well, for them that's gonna be the Wonka they grew up with.

Sydnee: They do have that one song where they're like, "[singing] Well, there's chocolate, and there's chocolate."

Raleigh: And they rhyme chocolate with chocolate. And then chocolate.

Sydnee: "[singing] But only... Wonka makes your something out of their sock-olates." Feet come out of their...? Is that what it is? Anyway.

Taylor: Your feet come out of their—

Sydnee: Yeah. They just ma—

Taylor: Never mind.

Sydnee: They just make words like socks rhyme with chocolate. Sock-olates. Chocolate.

Raleigh: Hmm.

Sydnee: That's one way to rhyme.

Rileigh: Clock-olates.

Sydnee: Clock-olates.

Rileigh: Block-olates.

Sydnee: You could keep going all day, really, if you think about it.

Rileigh: Dock-olates.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Rock-olates. That's Rileigh's day.

Rileigh: Walk-olates.

Sydnee: That's... got that covered. Do you wanna talk about Twister?

Taylor: I think we probably should.

Rileigh: [crosstalk]

Sydnee: Uh... so, Twister came out in... oh, I checked right before. '90...

Rileigh: Uh, '96, I believe.

Sydnee: '96. I was sitting here thinking if it was '94 or '96. 1996. It's a movie about people who chase tornadoes.

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: That's—I mean, if you haven't seen—

Taylor: [crosstalk]

Sydnee: Yeah. If you haven't seen Twister there's really—like, that's the plot. There are people who chase tornadoes. Two of them were married, and

now they're divorcing... because one is so passionate about tornadoes, and has—that's all that she can focus on. And the other one wants, like, a normal life. That's tornado-free.

Taylor: Is that why they broke up? 'Cause I didn't get the vibe—it seemed like he left her. But was it—I don't think the tornadoes were involved, 'cause he's clearly just as passionate about tornadoes, if not more so.

Sydnee: He is, but he's trying to, like, let go of his wild tornado-chasing years and be more grown up. And she is still like, "No. I'm determined to make my machine that studies tornadoes work."

Taylor: But it was his machine in origin.

Sydnee: Well, I thought they made it together.

Taylor: But he designed it.

Sydnee: Yes. But she—one way or another, the vibe I always got was that she put work above their marriage. And he was trying to put their marriage above their work. And that that was the central conflict. And then he realized that he was as passionate about tornadoes as she was, and in that, found his passion for her all over again, I guess.

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: There's some collateral damage in there. His psychiatrist girlfriend. I feel bad for her.

Taylor: Yeah. In my head—and I haven't watched this—I mean, I watched it freshly this week, but before that I don't think I had watched it for over a decade. In my head, she was really awful. But as an adult rewatching this I'm like, I mean, she really did her best. They put her in incredibly life threatening situations and she kept rolling with it until she was like, "Alright. I guess I can deal with you almost killing me multiple times, but I'm pretty sure you're in love with your ex-wife, so I think I should leave."

Riley: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Like, that's what did it for her. [laughs]

Sydnee: And I hate—I hate that—okay. I don't want to—well, I'll just go ahead and talk about it. Most people have seen Twister. That's really the plot. Helen Hunt is the scientist. Joe, Dr. Joe, uh... Dr. Joe Harding, I think? And Bill is Bill Paxton's name.

Taylor: Bill is Bill.

Sydnee: And—yeah. And, uh, and they were married, and he's trying to follow her around to get her to sign the divorce papers with his new fiancée, and she's chasing tornadoes. And there's a rival group of tornado chasers led by Cary Elwes, who's, like, funded by... I don't know! Big Tornado?

Taylor: [simultaneously] Big Tornado. [laughs]

Sydnee: I don't—[laughs]

Raleigh: Big Tornado, sure.

Sydnee: He represents the establishment.

Raleigh: Uh-huh.

Sydnee: They have, like, fancy trucks that match that carry their tornado equipment. And, like, Joe leads, like, the ragtag group of science nerds who—[laughs] who chase tornadoes. God, I love this movie.

Taylor: The tornado freaks.

Sydnee: The tornado weirdos! They play rock music. While they chase tornadoes!

Taylor: Their cars don't match.

Sydnee: [laughs] One of 'em drives a van!

Taylor: Oh...

Sydnee: [laughs] But they, uh—he's following her around trying to get her to sign these papers, but he's also really excited because the machine that they had designed together now she's trying to get work and get it up inside a tornado and study a tornado, and so he ends up following her. And the girlfriend kind of gets jettisoned.

And I hate the—like, the relationship they set up there—and this was very classic for that time period—is that the new girlfriend we're supposed to think is not cool because she doesn't want to get in a car and follow a tornado. Which is a very rational thing to say. Like, "Actually, I don't study tornadoes. I'm a psychiatrist. I don't want to follow that tornado."

Also, she's on the phone with patients!

Raleigh: Yeah. And then that—

Sydnee: She's taking work calls.

Raleigh: That just makes sense to me. It's like self-preservation 101.

Sydnee: Yeah. She's just like, "I don't wanna follow the tornado with you. I don't know the proper procedures. I don't know what we're doing. You all don't seem to know what you're doing."

Like, the first tornado they chase their truck gets turned upside down.

Taylor: Well, and even like—like, the first one she does—like, he says "You can go back to the hotel" or whatever. And she's like, "No, I wanna see." You know? Like, this is a healthy relationship. "I wanna see what you're passionate about. I wanna see your thing."

And, I mean, your thing is a tornado [through laughter] that is gonna kill us. So that's, you know, a lot to work with, the process, but... she really does try to be supportive.

Sydnee: Yeah! She's really—she's trying. She's trying to be nice. She's not mean to Joe. She wants this woman to please sign the divorce papers so she can marry this dude. That's rational. But then it casts Helen Hunt's character as kind of, like, by comparison you start to get these, like, pick-me vibes. Like, "I'm the cool chick who hangs with the dudes and chases tornadoes, and you can't hang 'cause you're the new girl who's afraid of, like, getting her nails broken."

And, like, that's not... like, you don't need that. Why does any of that have to be part of this cool tornado movie?

Taylor: Yeah, that's true.

Sydnee: We don't need any of that in the cool tornado movie. [laughs]

Taylor: Even just like the scene where they're at her—her—is it her aunt's house? Where they're all eating, like, steak and mashed potatoes. And it's like, "Yeah, cool girl. She eats real food!"

And it makes a point of the therapist being like, "Oh... steak... " [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Which, like, I mean, it is. It's like steak and eggs, which isn't—like, I don't particularly want to eat for breakfast either. That's okay. That's not everybody's vibe. That breakfast does look incredible, though.

I always felt like someday I'm gonna take the time to make a list of the best, like, TV and movie breakfasts. [pause] [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: That's it, just make the list?

Taylor: Someday you're gonna—yeah. You could do that. I feel like that'd be a pretty short day.

Sydnee: [muffled laughter]

Rileigh: I thought you were gonna follow it up with, like, "And then I'm gonna try to make them all."

Taylor: [simultaneously] Make 'em, yeah. Document them.

Rileigh: And, like, try them so I can live out, like—yeah.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] No, I just-

Rileigh: I finally get to eat these things. But no, you just want to put 'em in a list?

Taylor: [simultaneously] You just want to write 'em down on a piece of paper. "Someday I'll do it." [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: We could do that. We could do that right now, Syd. Go ahead!

Taylor: Yeah, what else is up there?

Sydnee: It's good to set attainable goals! [laughs]

Rileigh: Ooh, Howl's Moving Castle. That's a good one.

Taylor: Yeah, yeah. [crosstalk]

Sydnee: That's on the list. That's on the list. This movie's breakfast scene is on the list. I'm gonna throw books in there. Do you remember in The Yearling when they talk about the breakfast that they make on the farm?

Rileigh: I don't think you can throw books in there. 'Cause you can't look at the breakfast.

Taylor: [simultaneously] Yeah, now you're going all over the place, yeah.

Rileigh: You're just describing a meal.

Sydnee: Read the description of the breakfast that they eat in *The Yearling* and tell me you don't want that break—it made me wanna grow up on a farm! I didn't know anything about farming. But I was like, "I would love to have that breakfast."

Taylor: I had the same experience with the food they described in, uh... what was it? *Little House on the Prairie*, the Laura Ingalls Wilder books.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And they always talk about, like, biscuits and honey. Like, hard biscuits and honey. And I'm sure that was not delicious. But for some reason it sounds delicious. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yes. No, I know what you're saying.

Rileigh: Um, I don't know if you all had this experience growing up in West Virginia. But to me, tornadoes were always the scariest thing that could possibly ever happen, because they never happen here, so I have no, like, sense of, like, what it actually is like. Just like, yeah, that's never gonna happen here, but if it did, oh man! We'd all be done for.

Like, they always freaked me out. And even now, watching, you know, this and seeing them still kinda freaks me out, I'm not gonna lie.

Sydnee: And they have happened here now.

Rileigh: Well, and now they have happened here, yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, just this past year we had... nine or ten tornadoes touch down.

Rileigh: But growing up we never had, like—other people I go to school with now that are from areas where that was common had, like, tornado

drills and stuff, and knew what to do in the event of a tornado because it was common. We didn't even do that.

Sydnee: It is—I read about this recently. Tornadoes are an extremely unique to the part of the United States that—I mean, that you'd think of where the tornadoes happen. To that chunk of the US.

Rileigh: All those flat states.

Sydnee: That is—I mean, the vast majority of tornadoes in the world, that is where they occur.

Taylor: Oh, wow.

Sydnee: Because it's a very specific set of weather conditions and land and whatever. I don't know. That's not my area of science that I know about. But for whatever reason, if you don't hear about tornadoes happening in other parts of the world very often, well, part of it is our American media bias and all that. But the other part of that is that they're not... they're not very common outside of the US. That area, that strip is moving because of climate change, and we are now in it.

Rileigh: Cool. Cool.

Taylor: Ohh!

Sydnee: We're on the edge of it. Yeah, West Virginia is still on the edge. But we are now—it is moving to include us, so we probably will see them more frequently here. Sorry.

Taylor: But we had—we had one in—we had a tornado in Bushwick. This was years ago, but I was living here at the time, and it tore up the park that I run in every day. It tore up a bunch of trees. And it just...

Sydnee: Oh my gosh.

Rileigh: Man.

Taylor: I mean, I guess all things considered, the fact that it touched down in a park that is banked by row houses, like, if it had been a block in any direction it would've caused...

Sydnee: Tons of damage.

Taylor: Yeah, like, mass devastation. But it hit the park and ripped up a bunch of trees. Tornadoes in New York don't make sense to me either. It's like, that's not—it's like us having hurricanes. Like, we're not built for that, you know? There's a lot of problems in New York. We're not built for hurricanes and tornadoes. [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: No. No, I know what you're saying. And, I mean, I do think they're very scary. 'Cause you can see, like, the—well, they talk about it in the movie. They're so unpredictable because it's a... it's not a—most are not a very wide weather system. It's a more narrow weather system. So, like, you can have an area of absolute devastation and destruction surrounded by a ton of houses that are untouched, which is really wild. And that's how—that was Helen Hunt's, you know, "You've never seen it miss that house, and miss that house, and come straight for you."

Which I thought was a very passionate speech when I was younger, and now as I grow up I'm like, she's talking about a tornado intentionally hitting your house. [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: She's got a vendetta against these tornadoes.

Sydnee: [laughs] She really hates tornadoes.

Taylor: She should've sat down with the therapist girlfriend maybe and had a conversation [laughs] about how tornadoes aren't out to get you.

Raleigh: Unpacked those feelings about tornadoes, maybe.

Sydnee: She really does. I mean, well, and she was the only one who'd ever been in a category five, you know?

Taylor: I just don't know why her dad didn't let go of that door.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: I mean, it flew off and they were okay in that bunker. I don't know why he didn't just say "Hey. I don't need to be by this door. I need to go down with my family."

Sydnee: [laughs] I don't—it's a good question. Yeah. But they—obviously throughout the course of the film they find—well, they have these machines called Dorothy that send all these little things up in—little sensors up into the tornado that will study the tornado. And they keep, like, breaking the machines and losing the machines, and they don't work until the—they have the last one, and then it's a... level five finger of god. [snorts] Tornado. That's what they call it.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Finger of god. And they manage to do it, Helen and Bill. And they're in the tornado. I don't know if that would... they make this big show of, like, there are these pipes that they strap themselves to as the tornado goes over them and they're like, "These pipes are sunk really deep in the earth, so the pipes aren't gonna get wrenched up out of the earth."

And okay, that makes sense to me. But the leather belt that they're just holding onto to keep themselves on the pipe... that's just a belt.

Taylor: Yeah. I also find it hard to believe—and it's the one where they're under the bridge and then the one at the end. Like, tornadoes aren't just wind in a circle. There's a bunch of stuff in there. How are you not getting, like, just beat to crap with shrapnel in a tornado?

Raleigh: [wheezes] Tornadoes aren't just wind in a circle.

[all laugh]

Taylor: I mean, they kinda treat it like they're just—eyes open, like, watching it while their legs fly up. Like, "Oh, it's so beautiful!"

Riley: "Wow." [laughs]

Taylor: Like, nah. You'd be getting beat up with, like, boards and cows and stuff! Like, I don't believe this!

Sydney: Let's go to our local meteorologist, Taylor Smirl. Taylor, is it true that tornadoes are just wind in a circle?

Taylor: Uh, no, actually. They're also—

Riley: [laughs]

Sydney: [laughs]

Taylor: There's cows in there too, and trucks, and Wesley, sometimes.

Sydney: Fascinating!

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydney: I know. Poor Cary Elwes.

Taylor: I can't wrap my head around him not being Wesley.

Riley: I know.

Taylor: And I've seen him in other movies, but in this, like, I don't like him playing this toolbag.

Sydney: I don't like him playing this toolbag. I don't like that he gets sucked up into a tornado and dies for it. I mean, hubris, you know? It'll get you every time when you're dealing with tornadoes, I guess.

Taylor: They clearly have sentience. They have vendettas.

Sydnee: I feel like... I feel like—before we end the episode, I do feel like I should address why this movie [laughs quietly] meant so much to me. Why are we talking about Twister during Pride month?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Uh, so, first of all, outside of the fact that, like, Helen Hunt's whole, like, style in this movie really spoke to me as a young woman, there was something about, like, she looked put together in a way that was not at all, um, to attract men. Do you know what I mean? Like, it was not—I mean, I know there's the shower scene and that's very, like—I mean, she's not naked. But that's a very classic, like, "Look, she's almost naked. Everybody check this out."

I mean, like, of course, of course. She's a pretty woman. We do that to them. But for the most part, she's dressed in a way that I do not think you dress if your goal is to get men to look at you. Right? I mean, is that fair to say?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: But I still felt like she looked intentional. It looked put together. And as a young woman I looked at her and thought, "She intentionally put together that look for her. And it is not for Bill Paxton."

Even though she's obviously still in love with him. It is not for him. It's for her. She feels good. She is comfortable. It is practical. It makes sense for her job. But she looks nice. And that really—I don't know. I remember looking at her and thinking, like, that really speaks to me. That really... I don't... I don't know that it occurred to me that you could, like, put your look together for yourself at that age, if that makes any sense.

And she was a science woman. And she wasn't like—usually science women in movies are depicted as kind of like... they're very passionate about their science, but they're always, like, a little clumsy, or like awkward. You know what I mean? There's something—it's like, because they're into science they can't function otherwise.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And so they're always sort of like—their glasses are falling off or they're tripping over something and, you know, they're like, sweet and into science, but that's about it. And it was cool to see, like, this is a science woman who is, like, self-possessed and determined, and steals her ex-husbands truck, and—you know? I mean... [laughs quietly] There was just... [laughs quietly] There was something so, like... in charge about her.

Taylor: I feel like you're dancing around the fact that you found her attractive. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah. I mean, that's what you're saying.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] But these were—but like—

Taylor: Yeah. You thought she was hot.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: But this came out in '96. So I was 13.

Taylor: Yeah, that would track.

Sydnee: So I d—well, but what I'm saying is...

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: What I'm saying is—

Raleigh: That's math.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I didn't understand that at 13. I didn't understand that I was finding her attractive. Because that wasn't an option in my mind when I was 13.

Taylor: But you get that now.

Sydnee: Yes. But what I'm trying to explain is why this movie left such an impression on me as a young woman.

Taylor: She was made for the female gaze. And the female gays.

Raleigh: Gaze and gays.

Sydnee: That's what I'm proposing. Do you think that this was intentional, or do you think that this is an accident, or do you think this is Helen Hunt—her interpretation of the character that led to this? I'm just curious how it came to be in a movie that is otherwise pretty... pretty formulaic and—and masculine. I mean, it's about people who chase big tornadoes, and there's lots of scenes with big special effects. That's a—I'm not saying that's for men, but it's a masculine type of energy.

Taylor: Well, you know, I feel like—and it makes sense that you also like Laura Dern in Jurassic Park.

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: That's what I was gonna say.

Taylor: Because yeah, I feel like they have the same energy. And I would propose that it's accidental in that these characters are written and designed as sort of the cool girl. You know, I don't want to call them pick-mes, but it's kind of that same, like, character of the era. You know, the reason they dress that way is they dress for function. They dress—they don't care—they don't want to be pretty. They don't wanna be like, you know, girly. They're just hanging out with the boys and they're wearing whatever.

But I feel like that archetype had a secondary accidental audience, which was... women that like women. You know? I think that is why those

characters—I mean, I think—you're not alone in those two characters from that time period opening a lot of people's eyes and going, "Wait a second." [laughs] "Huh."

Sydnee: Well, and it really—it—yes. I started to reconsider, like, who did I want to be? What did I want to look like? And who was it for?

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Because if I was finding Helen Hunt's character attractive—not just like the way she looked and the way she dressed, but the way she behaved, and just who she was, if I was finding that attractive, what did that mean in terms of who I was and what I was attracted to? What did it also mean in terms of what you could be? I mean, I think that was the other side of it for me. It wasn't just like who I was attracted to. You know, Helen Hunt and then Laura Dern in Jurassic Park represented a different thing that I didn't know was an option. You know? And I know that sounds dumb now.

Taylor: No!

Raleigh: I get it.

Sydnee: Like, in my 40s, I understand. But at 13, I... I didn't know that that was a choice. And I don't know. It... it felt very important to me to, like, think about those characters and try to understand what my teenage brain was, you know, processing.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: It's your first hint that you could be someone with 12 pairs of overalls. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah!

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: If you know what I mean.

Sydnee: [laughs] I mean...

Rileigh: You can clip carabiners on everything you wear one day.

Taylor: Yeah!

Sydnee: [laughs] You—

Taylor: I—I bet Helen Hunt's character had a carabiner or two.

Rileigh: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: Oh, you know she did! Well, that would've come in handy there at the end with that leather strap and the pipes and everything. A carabiner or two would've made that—

Taylor: It just would've had to have been a really strong carabiner. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Listen. I have some really big ones.

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: No, but I think—that is—this is why—thank you both for watching Twister. This is why I wanted to talk about it, is that for me, it was more than just an awakening. I think we talk about that a lot. Like, when did you first realize, like, "Oh. I might not be totally straight." And it's kind of like a jokey thing. Like, you're attracted to somebody and it hits you.

And it was that. That was part of it. But that wasn't all of it, specifically with this character. Because I knew I loved science, because I knew I was going to go into the sciences. At that point I didn't know it was gonna be medicine. I thought I was going, like, the lab route in the biological sciences.

Rileigh: I thought you were gonna say tornado route.

Sydnee: Not the tornado route. [laughs quietly] Never interested in weather. But passionate about science. And it just—like, all of a sudden, if you can see yourself being something different, then that allows you to open

your eyes to what you like, and what you're into, and how you feel about... things, and other people, and... I don't know. Twister did that for me.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: So, thank you both. I appreciate you.

Raleigh: Thank you, Helen Hunt.

Sydnee: Thank you, Helen Hunt. And Laura Dern, just as long as we're at it.

Taylor: Yeah, just—of course. Always.

Sydnee: Yeah. I just love Laura Dern.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Taylor, what's next? [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Well, I was gonna say, I think that this goes well into the movie I picked. It's not from our generation. It's out now. But I think for Pride, it's a good movie to talk about, and that's I Saw the TV Glow, which will absolutely continue this discussion of, like, seeing things at a young age that help you understand yourself.

Sydnee: Perfect.

Raleigh: Perfect for [crosstalk].

Sydnee: I know, I've been wanting to watch that, so I'm excited to.

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: Alright. Well, we'll watch that for next week. I think it's streaming for a lot of us, so if it's not in theaters locally. And thank you both. Have happy Pride days, and happy Pride month until I talk to you again.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: Just go out and be as gay as you can.

Raleigh: I try.

Taylor: Enjoy your brunch today.

Sydnee: Oh, thank you. Enjoy serving and serving.

Raleigh: Serving and serving!

Taylor: Yeah. I always do. [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Uh, thank you. You should check out Maximum Fun if you haven't, and listen to all the other great shows on the network. You can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org. And thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, Baby You Change Your Mind.

Raleigh: This has been your cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I am Raleigh Smirl.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Raleigh: I am still buffering...

Sydnee and Taylor: And I... am... too.

[theme music plays]

Sydnee: I mean, it was also just that I found her hot.

Raleigh: Sure.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, that was part of it. Like, I know.

Taylor: You were saying a lot of words to say that.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well, I just...

Rileigh: We got there eventually.

Sydnee: It's bigger than that.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, no, that—that...

Taylor: [wheeze-laugh]

[music plays]

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